

AN EASTER ROSE.

It had snowed all day and half the long night, and on the second morning the drifts lay deep and the feathery flakes clung to window, fence and gable and filled with their moist padding each crevice and cranny. They draped the tall old elms by the gate, softened the outlines of the gaunt birches and the knobby apple-trees in the lane, while the lilacs in the yard looked as if June had stolen on them unawares, so like their own blooms did the powdery masses seem when the sun's first rays fell reluctantly upon them.

It was just at sunrise when the younger of the P-arson sisters rolled up the white curtain and looked on their little familiar world, so dazzling in its unsullied whiteness, looking with a pleasure not less keen because she could not speak of it to her sister and lifelong companion, at the mimic blooms in the yard, and watching the furs and hemlocks shake their cumbered branches as the wind passed by. She turned presently, however, from this outlook upon sleeping pasture and orchard lands to see the more prosaic, yet perhaps more enlivening view opposite, saying, as she drew up the shade of a southern window:

"There ain't a bit o' smoke stirring over to Miss Churchill's. I'm afraid the poor creetur's sick, or something's happened. There's fires everywhere else, and Esther is shakin' the tablecloth, over to Carew's. But over to Cynthia's there aint a sign o' smoke. I s'pose she might 'a' overslept. It's been so thick for a day or two I couldn't tell anything scarcely."

"She may be gone away somewhere," said the elder sister, Miss Parthura, familiarly known as "Thury," who was clearing the table.

"I don't know where she'd go," said the other, leaving her point of vantage at the window and coming to help her. "I do feel considerable worried. And 't ain't as if there was anybody that felt responsible for her; now Nathan's gone, there mightn't anyone happen in for days, 'thout it was Eleazer, and he's apt to be forgetful."

"Well, I wouldn't git worked up, Abby. We shall hear, I guess, if anything's the matter. Sarah keeps as good a lookout as you do, and there's Eleazer to send. It is a shame and a pity, though, for anybody to live so, when they could have things different. There's Nathan, now, I don't suppose she'd hear to giving him a chance."

"And there's Esther, awaiting," said Abby. "It does seem hard. They're willing to work, and be saving; but it does seem as though," she added, timidly, a faint color creeping into her thin, faded cheeks, "they might have the comfort of living together."

Miss Thury shook her head soberly. "It'll be a long time first, I guess, if they wait to get any kind of a start. That was the queerest mussy, it was made out to be all straight and legal! I declare, I s'pose the law must have its way, or there wouldn't be anything to hang to, but I do think a little common sense would go a sight further sometimes."

"But I do know as Cynthia's so much to blame," said Abby, deprecatingly, as, having finished the dishes, she turned to the seemingly superfluous task of "righting round" the already primly clean rooms, while Thury went to feed the hens; "thought is," she added, half to herself, raising her voice as Thury returned presently, with a handful of eggs, "a dreadful thing for her to live so. They say she ain't comfortable, nothing like."

"She won't make herself so," said the other taking off her hood. "She's too close to spend for't, and she never had any real faculty. An' she just scrumps along, this way an' that,—some crackers an' a taste o' pork now and then, an' baker's bread, and a bit in the buttery,—I don't see how she's stood it till now. An' she with money to interest, and farms to let! It ain't Christian, no ways!"

"It she wa'n't alone, maybe she'd do different," said Abby, meekly. "It is lonesome doing for anybody's self, and nobody to care how things are."

"She wouldn't be alone," returned Parthura; "though I don't s'pose she is so much to blame. She's been through with an awful sight," she added, as having finished their "chores" they sat down to their rug-working together. "But what could she expect, n'rinn' that old skin-fint that had worn out two wives, and only wanted her to save him help, and so's he could git holt of what tell to her. And she was a likely girl!"

"Nathan's mother was a likely woman, and a good one," put in Abby timidly, as her sister paused to plan the colors of a braid. "An' she married him."

"I know it," answered Thury, waxing her thread vigorously; "but she didn't know him as Cynthia did—she came from the Fisks and had only seen him a few times. An' I guess she was thinkin' of havin' a home for her boy, more'n anything. She had a girl too, then, but she died. Well, she found him out, but he wa'n't then what he was in Cynthia's time. I do as you can remember so well, but the stories they used to tell about the way he kep' her, and what he did with her property and interest money while she was a-livin' and goin' without would 'a' made you shiver! An' he comes as near as a dead man can to keepin' holt of it now."

Abby sighed, but did not dispute the statement, only as the two worked on at their sober stint, she glanced up at a little oftener than was her wont to look wistfully across the drifted fields to the far blue hills and the bluer skies above them, as if seeking from nature something of that of which the humanity around them had little to give. The forenoon was waning, and they had already risen to fill the teakettle for dinner, when Abby said, leaning forward eagerly:

"There's the snow-plow, and the big team following, and some one's coming in here. It's Eleazer! and I'm afraid something's happened."

"Now don't git nervous, it's only an errand o' Sarah's, I guess," said Thury soothingly, as she opened the door and set a chair for the caller, adding:

"All well down the road, Leazer? Your folks all right?"

"O, we're all smart," said Eleazer, "but there's them that ain't, not fur off. Yes, it's Miss Churchill, Sarah, she was fidgetin' because she couldn't see no smoke a-goin'. You know Cynthia's a master hand to get up early whether she does anything or not, and she goes off to bed at sundown on account of tramps; she thinks having a light draws um. Well, I went over there a

while ago and I knocked and couldn't see nor hear anybody, and I went round to the side door, and turned the button with my knife-blade,—any straggler might have tried that trick; I don't wonder she gets scairt,—an' I found her flat on the ground there, did n't know anything! I s'pose," he went on, enjoying the effect of his story upon his hearers, and changing his seat leisurely to prolong their suspense, "I s'pose she went out after some wood, or kindlins, an' was took right there. Oh no, she ain't dead yet; but she is putty sick. Wore out, the doctor says, and he spoke putty doubtful about her."

"But who will do for her?" questioned Parthura anxiously.

"That's what we don't know," answered Eleazer. "Taint no place for her there. It's damp, and nothing to do with; no fuel, only a few crow-sticks. An' there's no one 'round to go. The best way is to git some one to take her and take care of her."

"It won't be long, I don't believe; though Jotham, he's tuten' 'round, pretendin' it's only a faint spell, such as they have sometimes with la grippe. I know better, and so does the doctor, and I was bound you should know how't was, afore you made up your minds about it. Yes, they want to know if you can't feel to take her in. There ain't no other place, thout it's us, and Sarah ain't able; and I wouldn't ask Carew, after the way she and Jotham's done by Nathan."

"Well, what do you say, Thury and Abby?"

The sisters looked at each other questioningly. The elder spoke first.

"I s'pose we could."

And the younger spoke up quickly.

"I'll run and put a fire in the south bedroom, and warm the bed good. Maybe 'Leazer'd help us move the lounge in; some one'll have to be up and down with her. You'll want to bring her in the warm part of the day."

Eleazer nodded, and proceeded to lend the help they needed, leaving them to complete their preparations while he returned their answer.

At one o'clock all was ready, even to the basin of gruel simmering on the stove, and the blankets warming before "the airtight" in the south bedroom. A little later came slowly up the hill the long pung which bore the widow Churchill to the shelter which had opened to her. Two or three men of the neighborhood walked beside the team, and a straight young figure sat in the forward end, stooping now and then to draw the covering closer.

Strogy arms lifted the shrunken form gently, but even Miss Parthura shrank a little at the first glimpse of the drawn, shrivelled, glassy face. But Abby, conquering her reluctance and leading the way in, was sure that a softer look came into the feverish, beadlike eyes as they laid her down. Abby was sure that it was not all bodily relief, and that her restless glance took in the flowers she had placed on the stand at the bed's head.

It was some time before the sisters could, as they expressed it, "get wanted" to this strange invalid guest. Sickness, and sorrow, too, they had accompanied with in their own household, but never in this forbidding, hopeless, uncanny guise; never in one too, so wholly irresponsible to their willing ministries.

But, slowly, almost imperceptibly, a change came. The sick woman seemed to watch their coming, to be comforted by their tenderness, and would smile back to their greetings. She grew steadily stronger, could sit up a little, and then a longer time, and presently could occupy the lounge in the living-room, and move from it to the rocker, and from that to the sunny southeast corner where she insisted on maintaining it able to leave her bed, would watch with wistful, hungry eyes every detail of the simple, earnest, cheerful life, that went on from day to day in the old farmhouse, where the very timbers seemed seasoned with the wholesome, peaceful living of generations of honest, God-fearing, willing-handed and open-hearted men and women. Their prudent, provident housekeeping, the little self-denials they hid from each other, or sometimes showed for a common purpose of thrift or charity, the homely pleasures they planned and enjoyed, their loving care of their simple possessions, and the touches that made the low, plain rooms blossom into homelike beauty, their delight in common joys and their sympathy with all around them, were, to this homeless woman like a story of which she could not leave a line unread.

She took special interest in Abby's plants, though not all the good woman's transparent hints or even her open invitation to share their care could win her to any tendance of them.

"I like to see you fuss over 'em," she said. You make them grow and be their best. They wouldn't for me. They have to blossom, with you a-lookin' for it. But," she went on, with a ring of contradictoriness in her voice, that was almost plaintive despite, "I don't b'lieve that one you're waterin' now will come to anything. You've been doin' for it ever since I come here, an' I tell you it's no good."

"Oh yes, it is," said Abby, cheerfully, stirring gently the moist earth about a scraggy rose bush as she spoke. It's picked up a lot already, an' it's goin' to bloom by-and-bye. I'll have to, you know."

The other shook her head in answer but Abby knew not a leaf came on its stunted, thorny stalk that Mrs. Churchill did not see as soon as she.

From this window she could see the Carew homestead, and, quite plainly, Esther's comings and goings and many of her daily doings. She could see her sometimes, on a crisp, bright morning, sharing with her young brothers the long slides the fields of crust afforded; starting them off to school, with slates and dinner pail; coming out to meet her father as he came on his loads of wood; and, one day spreading out long lengths of cotton cloth to whiten in the March sunshine. Was it for her plenishing? It was likely to be a long time yet before it would be needed, unless something happened that no one expected.

The thin hands on the worn sill trembled uneasily as the widow Churchill sat watching Esther as she sprinkled her clothes that morning. The girl moved quickly, as if her heart were light. Perhaps she had had a letter from Nathan—Nathan, who had in his veins no drop of blood to make him kin to the good woman who sat there so quietly, yet who was more nearly her kindred than any other person living. And Nathan's lot had not been an easy one, nor was it like-

ly to be at best, handicapped as he was at the start by early deprivations. Still, a little now would do much for him and his. Why had his step-father, her husband, had no heart or conscience in the matter, claiming even the boy's own small inheritance? Why had he made it so hard for her to do as she would with what was rightfully as well as nominally hers? She looked across the fields to another house, Jotham's, the son of Cyrus Churchill by his first wife. Was there a living hand behind the dead one which seemed to control her so mercilessly? And was she quite in their power after all? The world seemed very safe and wide and peaceful here, as it were, indeed, what she had been ready to doubt, as Thury sometimes called it, with homely, familiar reverence, "God's world." It seemed as if one might be free to do a just or a kind thing in it—as if justice and kindness were uppermost and at the heart of it.

Mrs. Churchill's improvement was a surprise to her neighbors and even her physician, who began to speak hopefully of her recovery. Thury and Abby were overjoyed, and spared no pain to guard the gain so hard won. But, before any one else saw it they were aware of a change, of decline they could not stay with all their homely skill; and it was a grief to them that, though she seemed quite content with them, and appreciative of their loving care, there was so little they could do for her.

"Tell us something to do for you. There must be something," they would say.

One day she answered, "Yes, I want you to have 'Squire Peters come over, this forenoon, if he can. Tell him it's business. And I should like to have Esther Carew come over and sit with me awhile, some day soon, if she'll come."

They sent for the lawyer at once, and he stayed in the south room a long two hours. The sick woman could not talk continuously, she had to rest often. Before he went Thury and Eleazer Stooks were called in to write their names as witnesses to the widow's tremulous signature. Afterwards, Esther came and sat quietly by her. Her face had lost its hardest lines, and she looked younger and fairer than the girl could ever remember her. She smiled at Esther as she rose to go, and stroked her hand.

"Be good to Nathan, and be both of you as happy as you can," she whispered.

"Oh yes," said Esther, turning to hide her tears. "And you—"

For answer, she smiled again, and into her eyes crept a look of in-flable content, as if someone were keeping for her what life had never brought.

The end came next night. In the morning Abby watered her plants, and with her tears saw that the stunted rose-bush had put forth one perfect flower, and they laid it in her hand that Easter Sunday.

When the will was read it was found that in the very exception of one bequest to her "dear friends," the Pearsons, she had made Nathan her sole heir, with the request only that he restore the old farmhouse where she had lived so long. And Nathan and Esther, in grateful tenderness, have not only restored and beautified the homestead, but have made it their own dwelling, eager to bring into it what the old house had never held—warm love and household happiness, and glad, for her sake, that their home joys should flower on a grim stalk that showed no promise of such blooming.

DUTCH CIGAR SHARPERS.

A Queer Sort of Roping-in That is Practised in Rotterdam.

"Americans are apt to think that they belong to the only enterprising nation in the world," said a New Yorker lately returned from Europe. "But I had a little experience in Holland recently, which showed me that business is business all the world over. I was walking through one of the principal squares in Rotterdam smoking a cigar, when I was approached by a well-dressed, middle-aged man who had an unlighted cigar in his hand. He stopped me, and in good English asked me for a light. I gave him a light and was about passing on when he said: 'I see that you are smoking a Dutch cigar. Would you mind telling me where you bought it, and what you paid for it?' Though somewhat surprised at the request, I told him I had bought it in a large shop in Hoog Straat, and that I had paid ten cents (about three cents American money) for it. 'The reason I asked,' he said, 'is that they do not deal honestly with foreigners here. You should have got a better cigar for that money. If you wish I can show you the place where I get my cigars, and where you can get twice as good a cigar for the same as the one you are smoking.' As I had intended to lay in a supply of cigars for a few days at least, and as I had nothing else to do, I agreed to go with him.

"He led the way through quaint and crooked streets and over many canals to a tiny tobacco shop in a narrow out-of-the-way street. We entered the shop, and my new-found friend had a brief conversation in Dutch with the woman behind the counter, which resulted in the production of a box of cigars from a shelf near by. Taking my cigar gently out of my hand my mentor sniffed at it, and then with a sudden gesture of disgust threw it out of doors. He then took a cigar from the box and offered it to me to try, saying that it would not cost me anything. While I was smoking this in a tentative way he had another conversation in Dutch with the shopkeeper, and then having apparently arrived at some compromise he told me with a glad light in his eyes that he had agreed to let me have the whole box of fifty for four guilders (about \$1.60) and seemed very much pained when I told him I did not care for so many, as I had to pass the English custom house in a day or two. I finally bought half the box and departed.

"That afternoon I was standing in front of the statue of Erasmus, smoking one of my newly acquired cigars, when I was approached by a respectable-looking man who had an unlighted cigar in his hand, and who politely asked me for a light. When he got his light, he asked me where I had bought my cigar and what I had paid for it. It dawned upon me then that

in this country of the slow Dutch I had run up against a form of enterprise that would do credit to Baxter street in our own good town of New York, and the humor of the situation so overcame me that I laughed then and there. To the man with the cigar I explained, to his evident disgust, how I had been already taken in, and he went away after remarking that I should have got a better cigar for the money I paid. During my stay in Rotterdam I was tackled several times by these ropers-in, and hugely enjoyed telling them of the manner in which I bought my cigars; but I always made a point of letting them light their cigars first. They all seemed to have a poor opinion of the cigars I had bought."

THE KENT CASE.

A Visit to the Works of the British North American Note Company.

OTTAWA April 8.—A visit paid yesterday to the works of the British North American Bank Note Printing Company in whose employment is Mr. G. H. Kent, the report of whose recovery from Bright's disease with all its accompanying horrors of swollen limbs, convulsions, coma, and fearful pains, has been the cause of so much discussion in the city, showing that he is still in the enjoyment of the health which he has gained by a judicious use of Dodd's Kidney Pills. For a man who may be said to have had one foot in the grave, and whose health is despaired of, he presented a remarkable picture of health and vigour, and pursued his work at the heavy press without any indication of weariness. He is loud in his praises of the remedy which cured him.

Taken Literally.

As an example of the error of talking figuratively to those who do not appreciate, and who are apt to take everything literally, this story is worth reading. The respected superintendent of a Sunday school had told his boys that they should endeavour to bring their neighbours to school, saying that they should be like a train—the scholar being the engine and his converts the carriages. Judge his surprise when next Sunday, the door opened during lessons a little boy making a noise like an engine ran in followed by half a dozen others in single file at his back. He came to a halt before the superintendent, who asked the meaning of it all. The naive answer was—"Please, sir, I'm the engine and them's the carriages, as you told us!"

DOCTORS AND FLY BLISTERS FAIL.

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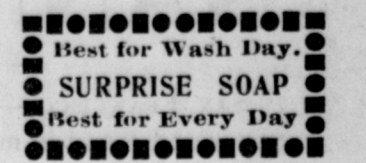
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